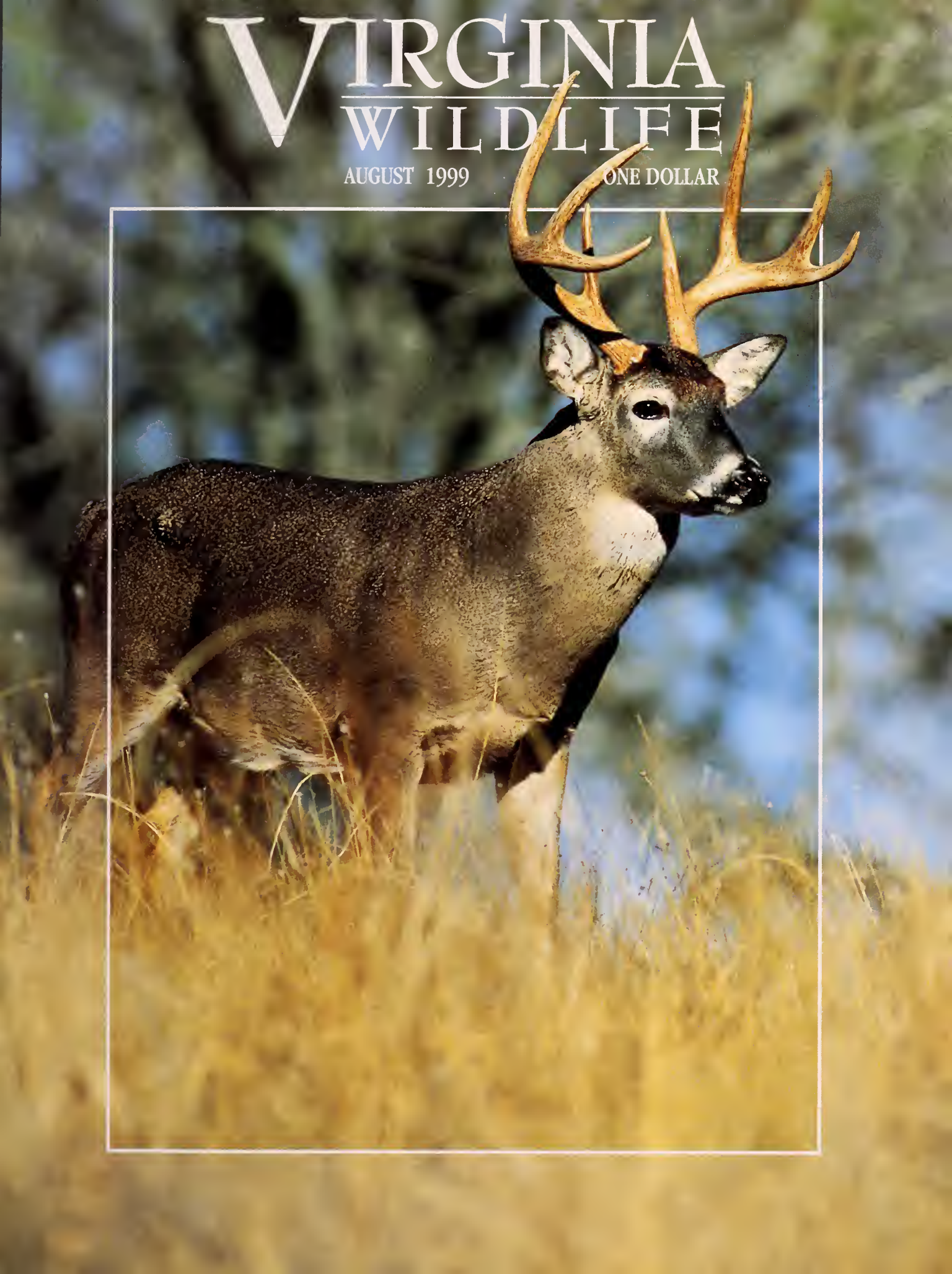
VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

AUGUST 1999 ONE DOLLAR



Director's Column

William L. Woodfin, Jr

The Conservation and Reinvestment Act

In past columns you have read about House Bill 38 that was passed by the 1998 Session of the Virginia General Assembly, and we have emphasized how significant that state legislation is to the revenues of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. This month I want to make everyone aware of some federal legislation that will also be of tremendous benefit to our wildlife resources.

Known as the Conservation and Reinvestment Act, this landmark federal legislation will provide increased funding for national conservation and recreation/open space programs. Congress is currently considering a bill introduced in each of its two houses, H.R. 701 in the House of Representatives and S. 25 in the Senate. While the two versions are similar, they are not identical.

It is important to note that this is not a new tax. It represents royalties already being collected from offshore drilling, and the responsible reinvestment of these royalties from non-renewable resources into renewable resources, such as wildlife conservation and open space acquisition.

The specifics in the proposed Conservation and Reinvestment Acts fall into three titles. Title I (Impact Assistance) provides revenue sharing for coastal states and local governments to mitigate the impacts of Outer Continental Shelf activities like drilling and exploration. Title II (Land-based Conservation) provides funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery. Title III (Wildlife-based Conservation) provides dedicated funding for wildlife conservation, recreation, and education programs. Under the formulas in H.R. 701, Virginia would receive over $27 million, including $9.9 million for Title III wildlife conservation, wildlife recreation, and wildlife education programs. Under the S. 25 formulas, Virginia would receive over $22.5 million, with $6.5 million available for Title III.

Governor Gilmore has conveyed to Virginia's Congressional Delegation his support for the Conservation and Reinvestment Act legislation, and the Virginia General Assembly passed a resolution during this past session that memoralized Congress to pass this bill. The benefits of this legislation will be realized through the reallocation of dollars to the States providing much needed additional funding for programs in outdoor recreation,

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wildlife conservation, and wildlife education. Your support is needed, and you can do that by contacting your U. S. Representative and U. S. Senators Warner and Robb. Just like the benefits associated with House Bill 38, the real winners will always be our wildlife resources. We all receive much enjoyment from those resources, so let's all do our part to ensure that Congress acts favorably on this important legislation. Your help is much appreciated.

Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

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Shep Rouse and his hunting companion, a black lab named Rascal, have a few dove hunting secrets to share in "Days of Wine and Dove Hunting."

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

Cover: White-tailed deer, ©Bill Lea

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Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

VOLUME 59 NUMBER 8

Mountain Lak

One of Virginia's most famous landmarks opens its doors to hunters.

by Gerald Almy

What would you get if you took 2,600 acres of prime Virginia mountaintop land and closed it to hunting for 50 years, preserving it in its natural state, then opened it to limited hunting of mature white-tailed bucks and does? Would the hunting be so easy it would be like picking apples from a tree? Would trophy bucks swarm past your stand in such numbers that you simply chose which one you wanted?

No. Nothing of the kind. What you get instead is a fabulous wilderness experience and a chance to lay your eyes, and if you're lucky, your sight on a handsome, mature whitetail. And that's if you hunt hard and luck comes your way.

©Gerry Walter

©Dwight Dyke

Located in Giles County, Mountain Lake Resort (right) features a stunning hotel made out of natural stone from the area. The history of the resort dates back to 1857.

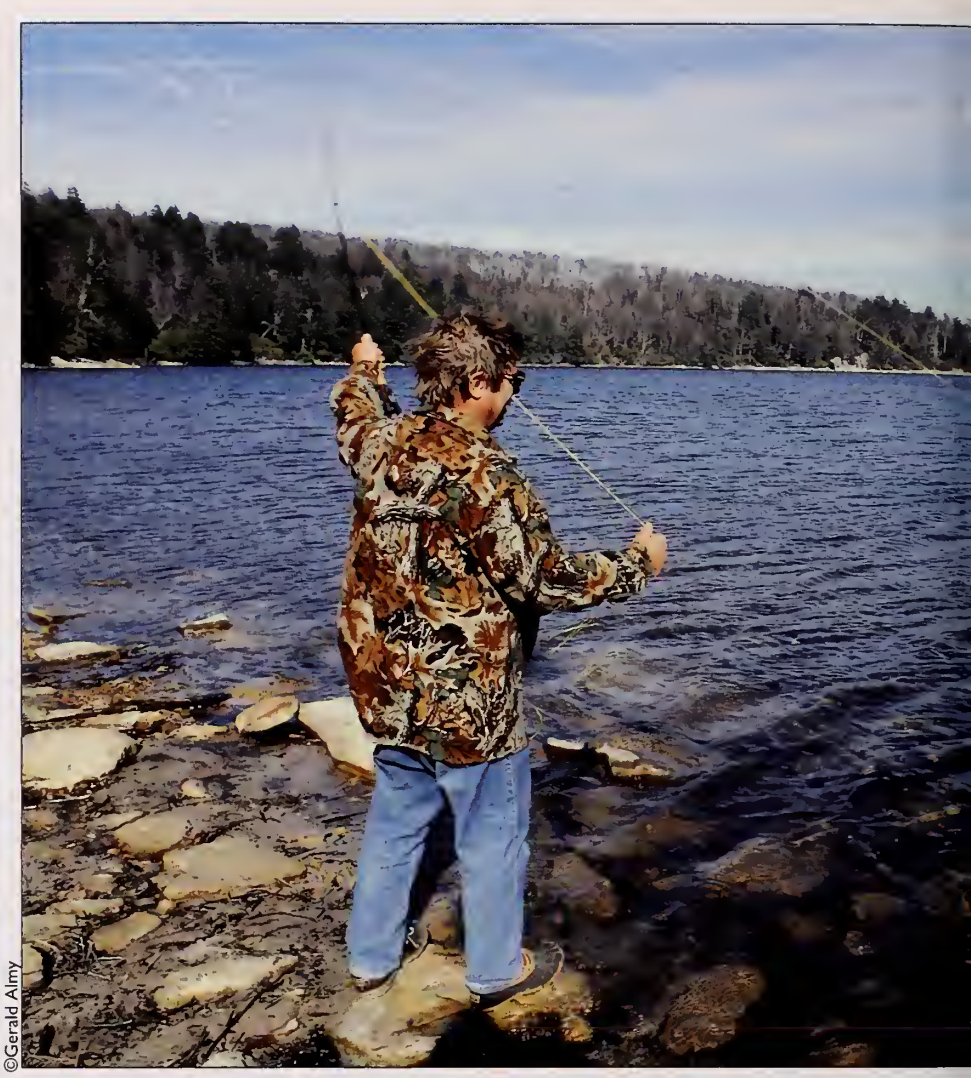
e Resort

That's what I found when I tried the first rifle hunt ever offered at Mountain Lake Resort near Blacksburg, Virginia, last year. That's also what a small number of bow and muzzleloader shooters found when they visited the property on earlier hunts. It was a marvelous wilderness hunt, but it was in no way a pushover. It was totally challenging and engaging. The fact that the property had not been hunted in 50 years meant there were many mature bucks living there. But a mature whitetail is never an easy quarry, and only male deer can be harvested.

Before going into the details of this new hunting opportunity and other outdoor activities available at this resort, a bit of background might be of interest. Located in Giles County, 55-acre Mountain Lake is one of only two natural lakes in Virginia. It was formed when a rockslide dammed the north end of the valley at the base of Salt Pond Mountain. Fed by underground springs, the water temperature rarely rises above 72 degrees, and that has allowed the resort to stock rainbow trout that offer excellent fishing.

The earliest record of the lake's existence was in 1751, when Christopher Gist surveyed the area for the Ohio Land Company. A pleasure resort was built on the property in 1857, and it was also used as a stopover for travelers on their way from Christiansburg to West Virginia. The hotel had various owners after that, until the early 1930s, when William Lewis Moody, of Galveston, Texas, purchased it. The original wooden hotel was torn down in 1936 and the present structure was built by an Italian stonemason from native rocks on the property. After William Moody's death, the hotel and land was acquired by his daughter, Mary Moody Northern. When she passed away in 1986, the property conveyed to the Mary Moody Northern Foundation and is now managed as a Wilderness Conservancy.

History buffs will enjoy this bit of background, but people more attuned to the present are often surprised to hear that this is also the location where Vestron Pictures filmed the box office hit, "Dirty Dancing."


©Gerald Almy

For sportsmen, the development of the deer hunting program is most intriguing. When owned by the Moody family the land had not been hunted. Jeffrey Slack, executive director of the Conservancy, gradually realized that the deer herd was becoming overpopulated and impacting the habitat negatively for other species of wildlife.

After obtaining approval from the Conservancy's natural resources board, he organized hunts to thin the herd, beginning with the 1998 season. Only mature bucks with spreads of 15 inches or better and does (in season) would be legal. What these hunters have found so far is that the mountaintop property has an abundance of deer, but the mature bucks are as wary as whitetails anywhere.

Since the hunts had just been organized, only a few sportsmen heard about them and bookings were modest for last year. In bow season four hunters took a few does, while one who had pursued game all over the world saw a massive 14-point buck that had him trembling so hard he missed at 25 yards!

Twelve guests came for the first ever muzzleloader hunt on the property. A thick blanket of fog ruined the morning, then gale force winds kicked up in the afternoon, but still several does were harvested. Over the next two days a few trophy bucks were seen, but for one reason or another, not taken. One young hunter had allowed his pow-

Stocked with rainbow trout, 55-acre Mountain Lake (above) is one of only two natural lakes found in Virginia. Besides deer hunting, the resort offers many other outdoor activities.

der to get wet and snapped two caps without getting his gun to fire while he watched a huge 9 pointer chase a 6 pointer in front of his stand. Another hesitated because he wasn't sure the deer met Mountain Lake's minimum antler requirement. Later, he realized it was definitely a good, harvestable whitetail.

Finally on the second muzzleloader hunt, things clicked. The weather turned colder, bucks began chasing does, and two hunters out of five harvested excellent deer. One was a heavy 8 point in the 120 Boone & Crockett class that weighed 144 pounds. Another was a bigger 8 point with lots of mass that weighed 154 pounds and had a 130 Boone & Crockett score.

Though Slack and his guides knew there were even bigger whitetails on the property, it was thrilling to see the first two bucks in 50 years harvested under Mountain Lake's new deer management program. When I settled into the comfortable stone lodge on the Sunday before opening day of rifle season, I wasn't counting on finding a buck as big as the two the muzzleloader hunters had taken. I was, however, intrigued with the Wilderness Conservancy's management philosophy of harvesting only mature bucks and does and hoped I could find a deer that was at least 3 ½-years-old with a 15 inch or better outside spread.

I had arrived early enough the Sunday before the opener to look over the property with Jeff and the habitat was intriguing. It was very wild, with many blowdowns from ice storms and thick cover. Due to last minute cancellations, I had the strange situation of having the entire Mountain Lake property available to hunt by myself. But as we drove around we only saw six does, so I knew the hunt wouldn't be a pushover. The next morning after a hearty breakfast I climbed into a treestand overlooking an oak flat where deer like to travel through on their way to a dense bedding area just off the lip of a ridge. Two heavy-antlered bucks had been seen here but not harvested by other hunters.

I felt confident as the sun rose in a flush of orange and the woods took on form and color. But five hours later, at 11 a.m. when I climbed down to return to the hotel for lunch, all I had seen was one doe far back in the brush. As we drove back, four does ran in front of us across the road. The weather was unseasonably warm and windy, so we wrote off the lack of bucks sighted to bad conditions. After lunch I walked down to the lake with my fly rod and caught five beautiful rainbow trout and one largemouth on Woolly Buggers before heading out at 2 p.m. for the evening hunt.

An old abandoned golf course sits on one of the highest points on the property, at over 4,000 feet. The formerly manicured greens have grown back to a natural setting, so Jeff and I thought this would be a good bet for an evening stand.

©Dwight Dyke

As we drove there, suddenly Jeff pointed to the left. A 9-point buck was standing back in the woods feeding on acorns. He appeared to have a 15-inch outside spread and fair mass with long brow tines, but the deer was just barely of the caliber Mountain Lake wants hunters to take.

"He'll be a good one next year," Slack said of the deer, probably a 2 ½-year-old. Even if it had been a harvestable buck, the hunting rules at Mountain Lake do not allow getting out to shoot a deer you see as you drive to and from stands on the dirt trails. Even if the buck had been huge we would have simply admired it and driven on to our hunting destination.

"We want the hunt to be entirely fair chase and sporting," Slack said.

Two hours after settling into the tower stand, a doe appeared at the edge of the woods, 80 yards away. There was no trailing buck, though, and soon she caught my scent and eased back out of sight into the forest.

Half an hour later, at 4:30 p.m., three more does emerged further down the meadow and began feeding. They didn't seem as spooky and eventually one of them fed to within 50 yards. Another pair of does trotted out 250 yards up the field. I watched expectantly, hoping a buck would come out in the waning daylight to join this growing herd of does.

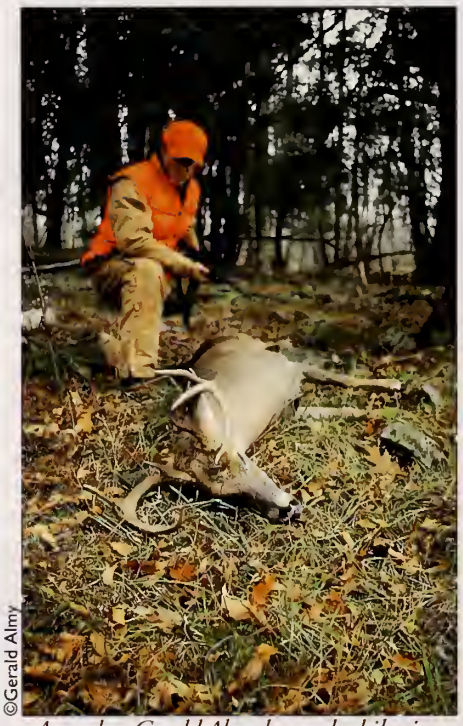
Finally, with less than ten minutes of legal shooting time remaining, a huge deer stepped out. I could tell by its size, muscular build and manner that it was a mature buck, even before I raised the binoculars and caught sight of the large, dark brown antlers. The deer was 125 yards away and surveyed the scene regally before briefly chasing one of the does. As he ran, I slowly raised the 30/06 into aiming position and rested the barrel over my palm on the stand's crossbar.

I had looked the 8 pointer over in the binoculars and knew it was a big deer with heavy antlers and a large body. The buck was three-fourths of the way across the field now and stopped to look around. Fearing he might chase a doe into the woods at any second, I aimed behind the front shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The 165 grain bullet found its mark and my Mountain Lake hunt was complete.

Jeff soon joined me and we admired the heavy buck before struggling to load it on the ATV for the drive back to the lodge. After field dressing the buck, it weighed 141 pounds, with 8 points, 20 and 21-inch main beams and a 16-inch spread. Most important of all, it was a mature deer at least 3 ½-years-old.

One more mature buck was harvested in the latter rifle hunts, a heavy 11 pointer in the 130 B&C class, for a total of four mature bucks and a number of does out of 28 hunters. Several other opportunities were missed or passed up.

More important than the quantity of deer taken, was the message the hunts conveyed. They showed that hunting can indeed fit in even in a classy resort setting such as this. They also demonstrated that deer hunts are compatible with the Wilderness Conservancy at Mountain Lake's goals, which include "conserving the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the land, water and resources and managing visitation for experiences with nature and personal development." □


©Gerald Almy

As author Gerald Almy learned while visiting this 2,600-acre mountaintop paradise, there are many outdoor experiences at Mountain Lake, including some great hunting.

Gerald Almy is a full-time outdoor writer from Virginia and is a field editor for Sports Afield *magazine.*

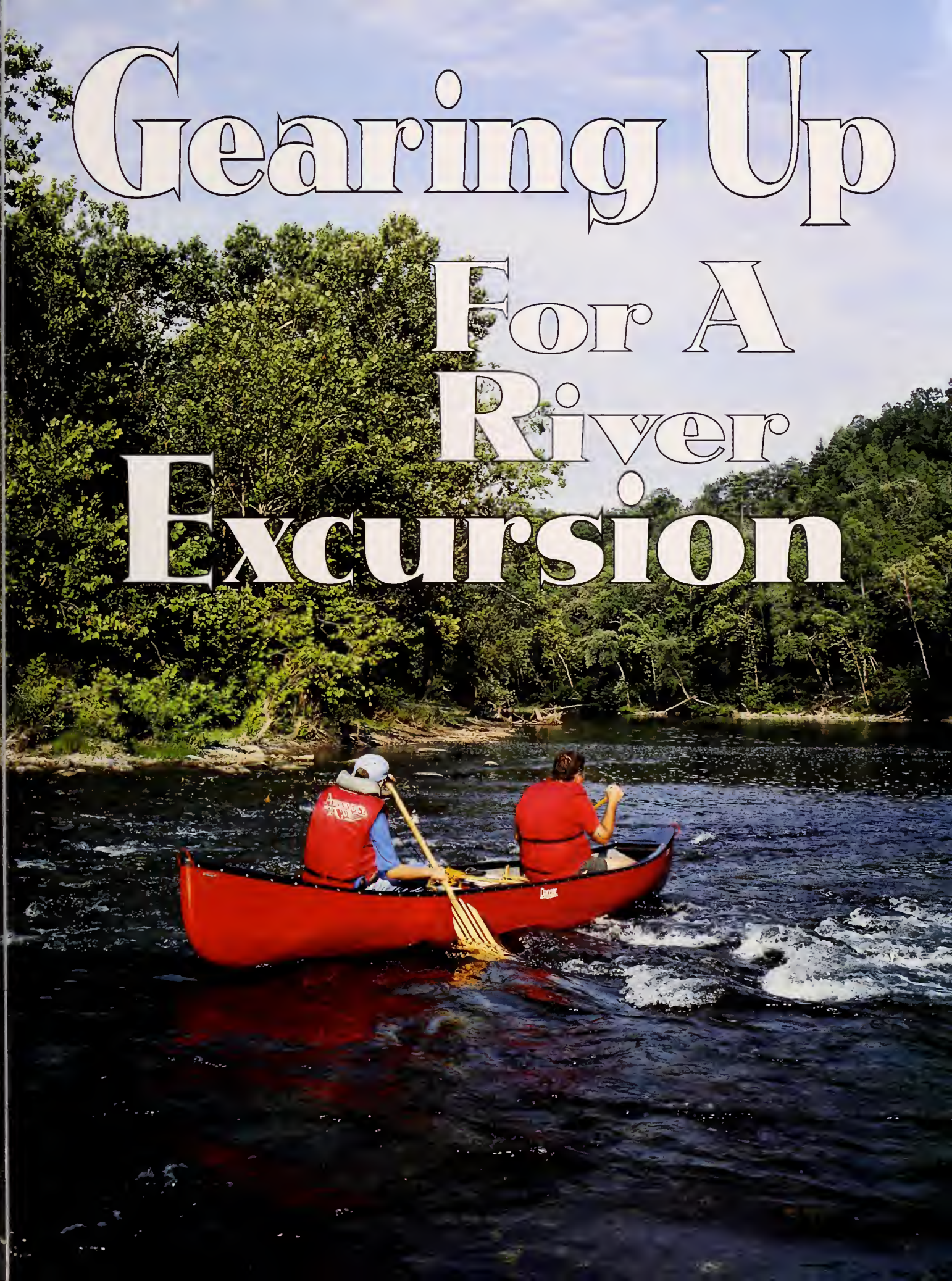
Mountain Lake Sporting Activities

Deer Hunts--Mountain Lake will offer bow, muzzleloader and rifle options for guests this fall. It's certainly not guaranteed that you'll tag a buck here, but if you do chances are it will be a nice, older animal. Doe tags will be available this year under the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP).

Besides deer hunting, many other outdoor recreational activities are available at Mountain Lake Resort. They include: wildlife viewing and photography, hiking and mountain biking, bird watching, archery lessons, trout fishing, hay rides, swimming, boating, horse-drawn carriage rides, pony rides, lawn games and wilderness day camps for children. Numerous seminars on plants, wildlife, ecology and other subjects are also held throughout the main spring through fall season, as well as special events such as wine tastings, Oktoberfest, wellness activities, and bicycle races.

For more information, phone 800/346-3334, 540/626-5139, 540/626-7121, or write the Wilderness Conservancy at Mountain Lake, 115 Hotel Circle, Mountain Lake, VA 24136.

Gearing Up For A River Excursion

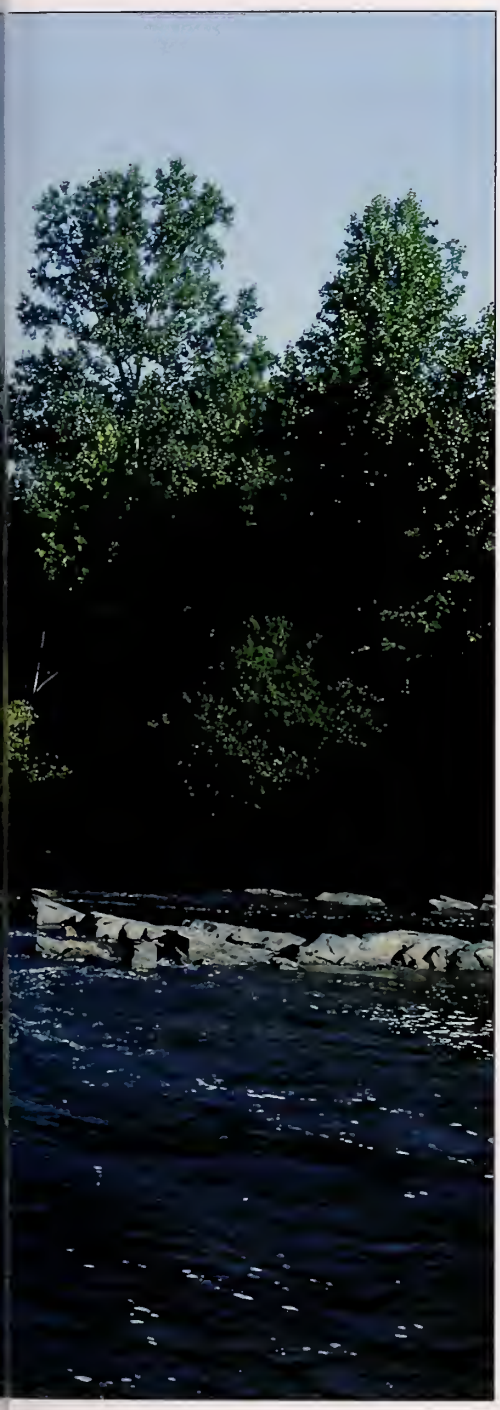


©Bruce Ingram

Young or old, canoeing and camping can be the perfect match for a great outdoor experience.

by Bruce Ingram

When my 13-year-old son Mark and I were on our way home from a weekend canoeing and camping excursion down the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers, I asked him what he thought was the highlight of the outing. Mark listed the smallmouth bass and redbreast sunfish he caught, the bald eagle and ospreys he saw, the new canoe strokes he practiced, the sighting of a water snake that had speared a madtom, the learning how to use a fly rod, and the experience of camping out by a Virginia river. But when asked which one was his favorite, he couldn't decide.



On the other hand, I had no difficulty giving my high point; it was simply being able to spend quality time with my son outdoors. If you are looking for a way to enjoy the Old Dominion outdoors with your son or daughter, then there are few better ways to do so than to go on a canoe and camping expedition down one of the state's major rivers.

Last August, during summer break from school, Mark and I spent those two days on the Rapidan and Rappahannock with John Garman, who operates Mountain Skills, an outdoors education and outfitting business in Fredericksburg, and with Smith Coleman, a fly fishing instructor and guide from the same city. Both individuals took plenty of time to work with Mark; for example, John instructed Mark on the proper way to cook over a camp stove and Smith showed my son how to smooth out his canoe strokes and his fly casting technique. Here's how you can enjoy similar quality time with your son or daughter.

Great Floats

Many of Virginia's rivers offer possible two or three-day trips that have places to camp out, such as mid-river islands or public land along the bank. Always be sure to obtain landowner permission before camping on private land. Some canoe liveries lease land along rivers and can arrange places for your family to camp for a fee.

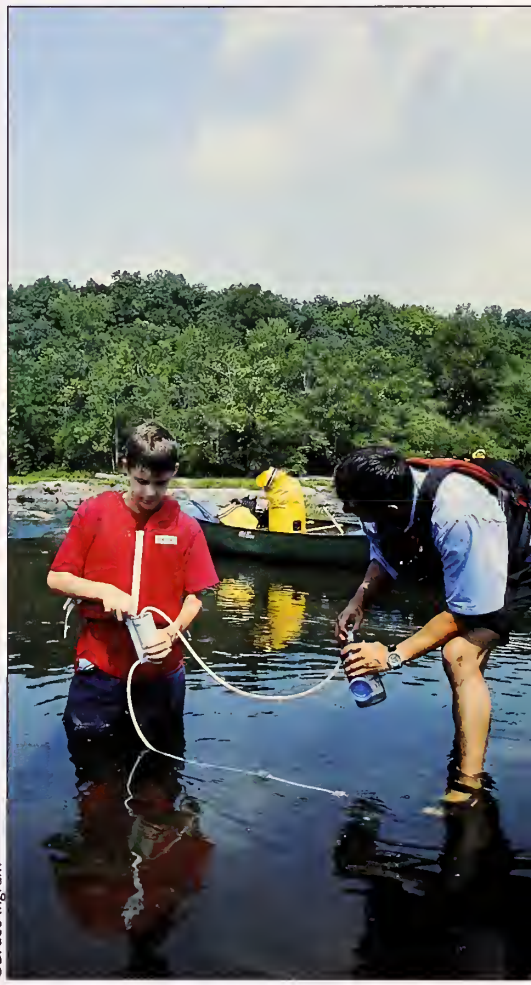
Also, be sure to check the weather before going on a trip, to call canoe liveries for current river conditions, and to erect your tent well away from the river. And remember that any river, no matter how placid it may appear, has the potential to change quickly because of a storm, water releases from a dam, or a host of other factors. Be sure to practice standard safety precautions with perhaps the most important being to always wear a life jacket.

1. James River, Joshua Falls to Riverville (15.5 miles). For more information, call James River Paddle Sports (804-384-3636).

2. New River, Riverside to Oldtown (6 miles) and Jackson Ferry to Allisonia (13.5 miles). On the latter trip, be sure to portage the New around Foster Falls or put-in below this Class III-IV rapid at the ramp within the New River Trail State Park. Both these trips feature islands, suitable for camping. For more information, contact Tangent Outfitters (540-674-5202)

3. Rappahannock River, Kelly's Ford Bridge to Motts Run Landing (24.5 miles). For more information, call Mountain Skills (800-357-9710) or Rappahannock Outdoor Education (540-371-7733). Smith Coleman can also be reached through Mountain Skills.

4. South Fork of Shenandoah, With only one major rapid, the Class III Comptons, the South Fork offers numerous combinations of family friendly floats. For more information, call Front Royal Canoe Livery



©Bruce Ingram

A safe float trip begins with having the proper equipment. Lightweight canoes, improved life jackets and water purification systems are a few of the new innovations that are making it easier for people to enjoy being on the water.

©Soc Clay

©Bruce Ingram

To add to the pleasures of a float trip (above) try cooking up a shore lunch of freshly caught fish. Wading (right) is a great way to slow down your fishing techniques and cool off during the hot days of summer. Public and private camp sites (far right) are available along many of Virginia's rivers. It is always a good idea to check weather conditions and to ask for permission to camp before heading out.

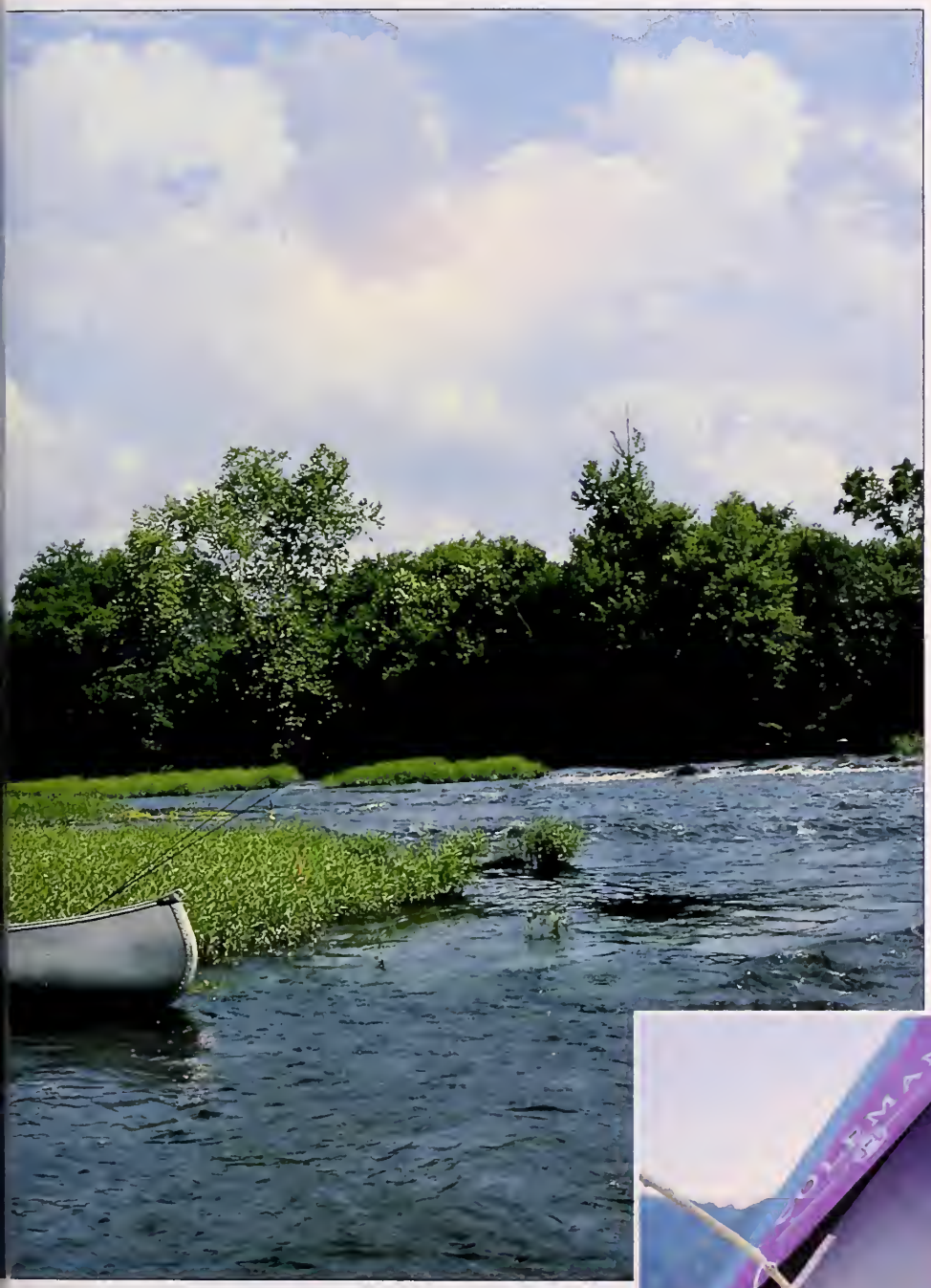
(800-270-8808) River Rental Outfitters (800-RAPIDS-1) or Shenandoah River Outfitters (800-6CANOE2).

Gearing Up

The challenge in taking an overnight canoe excursion is to pack so that you only bring along essential gear. Years ago on my first overnighter, I toted plastic water jugs, a cast iron skillet, a grill, an assortment of foods in tins, and several kinds of knives and tools. It was backbreaking to labor forward with all this stuff.

Fortunately, a better system exists. Here is John Garman's gear list.

1. Lightweight tent
2. Sleeping bags with pads
3. Mountain Safety Research (MSR) Waterworks Filter. This device filters out all bacteria including Giardia. Place the tube from the filter into a stream, pump, and a few minutes later, you will have 99.99 percent pure water.
4. MSR stove that burns on propane and eliminates the need to build a fire as well as unsightly fire rings. Modern day stoves are much easier on streamside habitat than the woodcutting and fire making process is and allows you to truly leave an area as you found it.
5. Plastic washable plates, cups, and eating utensils, along with two lightweight cooking pots.
6. Your favorite freeze-dried foods (in pouches). John Garman suggests high-energy foods such as rice and cheese. These foods can be supplemented with fish you catch or with chicken or tuna from tins. Oat-



meal, grits, and bagels are three standard breakfast foods that can be stored in pouches.

7. Toiletries and changes of clothes.
8. Dry bags.
9. All-purpose knife/tool.
10. Lighter and matches (one of which is bound to work).

Tom Ables, a spokesman for Buck Knives, says the trend in his industry is away from the Swiss Army concept of miniaturized knifes and tools to full-size knives and tools such as screwdrivers. His company's version of this is the BuckTool, with each tool and knife having an independent locking system, a safety feature that is especially relevant if you are on a multiple day trip.

Garman also suggests that canoe campers place air bags in a canoe's bow and stern for extra flotation. If you should overturn, having air bags would make righting the craft much easier. All your gear can be placed in two dry bags, which can be stashed in the middle of the canoe. Position items that you will need during the day at the top of one of the dry bags. For example, Garman always situates his water purifier and snacks at the top of a bag. Good snack foods include apples, oranges, gorp (trail mix), and Cliff Bars, a high-energy fruit and nut bar popular with hikers.

Granted, you will have to do some planning to have a successful canoe trip. But the best reward you can have is for your child to ask, as Mark did, if the two of you can go on another excursion next summer. □

Bruce Ingram is a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife *magazine and enjoys sharing his outdoor experiences with others.*

©Soc Clay

Warmwa

story and photos
by King Montgomery

The black basses—smallmouth and largemouth bass—and their close cousins, collectively known as bream, sunfishes, or panfishes are prevalent throughout the Old Dominion. Found in Virginia's ponds, streams, rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, they provide angling fun for everyone. They can be caught on spinning, casting, or fly fishing tackle. A $40 lure cast from a $30,000 boat or a garden worm dangled from a cane pole often yield the same results. These are everyones' fish.

On black bass, "I consider him inch for inch and pound for pound, the gamest fish that swims."

James A. Henshall, MD
Book of the Black Bass, 1881

er Magic

Many of Virginia's small-mouth bass rivers and streams were stocked in the 1800s by railroad workers who liked to fish.

Anonymous

Sunrise or sunset are the best times to use top water lures or flies for black bass. The bream, though, will often hit surface baits all day long.

James A. Henshall, MD
Book of the Black Bass, 1881

They are called "panfish" because they—the bluegills, the shellcrackers, and the crappies—taste so good fresh from the frying pan. It is wise to keep some of your catch for the pan, because they tend to overpopulate.

Bill Husted
Cox News Service

A frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife, King Montgomery writes the "Warmwater Journal "column in Fly Fish America *magazine. He lives in Annandale.*

"Sunfishes "...are harlequins of kids' hearts, a grand and generous fish, and a whitt of youth for many a middle-aged trout snob."

Nick Lyons
Confessions of a Fly Fishing Addict

"Sometimes the best thing a person can do with a computer is turn it off and go fishing."

Bill Husted
Cox News Service

Days of Wine

and Dove Hunting

As the fruits of his labor ripen on the vine, one Virginia farmer shares his secrets for sweet success.

by Ken Perrotte

"Punch it down once or twice before the end of the afternoon and try to get a few more of the barrels cleaned," Virginia winemaker Shep Rouse told his two vineyard assistants while peering into a 3,000-bottle vat of fermenting cabernet sauvignon grapes. "I'm going to do a little hunting."

The sweet, fruity scent of this wine in progress attracted hordes of bees around the fermentation tanks at Rouse's scenic Rockbridge Winery. Casks of French oak rested nearby, waiting a cleansing after doing their duty in applying a toasty taste and aroma to one of Rouse's latest vintages. "Punch it down" means to basically push the top layer of fermenting grapes down into the vat, stirring the pot a little, if you will.

Punching out of the 13-acre vineyard, as the autumn sun starts sinking toward the western horizon, is the norm for Rouse. He grabs his shotgun, his dog Rascal, and heads for one of the many neighboring farm fields where he indulges in one of his other passions, wing-shooting.

The western slope of the Blue Ridge mountains, viewed from Rockbridge County, presents a stunning backdrop for an afternoon of dove hunting. The warm, late afternoon sun bathes the fresh-cut cornfield in soft light and

Shep Rouse sometimes hunts right on his own vineyard. Doves like vineyards because the vines and wires afford protection from raptors. Rascal, a black lab, is an enthusiastic, if not sophisticated, hunting companion.

©Ken Perrotte

©Maslowski Photo

each week transforms the foliage into a greater display of color with the approach of winter slumber and spring renewal.

The birds come in a streaky fashion early on, two, four, or six together every 45 minutes. Dragonflies, butterflies and honeybees outnumber the feathered flyers by a good 100 to one. Two hours before dusk, the dove flight becomes consistent and the shooting fast. Rouse, who monitors his shooting performance like a pro baseball player keeps track of his batting average, achieves his limit well before the end of afternoon using an economy of shots.

"I believe part of maintaining good hunting is good marksmanship, because the less shots fired in a given situation, the less the game population is disturbed," Rouse declared. "This is especially true with duck hunting. You need to get to where you are successful on 60 to 70 percent of the shots you take. Learn your capabilities, improve, and take good shots.

"I think adhering to the game laws and being fair with the animals is important. You can exploit the game populations. There are certain times you can just clean up on birds because they're just crazed with hunger or thirst and that just hurts the populations. Keep the future in mind and always use what you take," he added.

Hunting philosophy aside, he calls dove hunting an excellent way to learn about wing-shooting. "You get enough opportunities to shoot because the limits are high. It's a great way to develop shooting skills," he explained.

Rouse, 44, grew up in Williamsburg. He started hunting when he was 11-years-old but says he really didn't start developing any proficiency until he was 16.

"My father wasn't much of a hunter. In fact, my grandfather really got me into it and I thought it was great," he said.

"I'm much more a bird hunter than a big game hunter," he continued. "I will hunt deer because they eat my grapes. I had to get an out-of-season crop damage kill permit to take a doe that had developed an almost exclusive fondness for visiting the vineyard daily.

A graduate of Washington and Lee University, Rouse became a Fulbright scholar studying overseas. He first began making wine in 1977 in Germany, then worked in California during the 1978-79 harvests. He earned a graduate degree in food science specializing in wine making from the University of California-Davis, a school renowned for its agriculture curriculum.

The bearded vintner was a winemaker in California's Napa Valley from 1982-84, worked two more harvests in 1985-86, before the Old Dominion called him home.

An expertise in making fine wine wasn't the only asset he brought back to Virginia with him, having met his wife Jane during his "Left Coast" years.

Back in Virginia, he began making wine with Mont Domaine Cellars in 1986 before founding Rockbridge Winery in 1991, at the site of a dairy farm that dated back to the 1800s. Rouse now turns out more than 6,000 cases of 17 different wines a year, many of them award winners in state and regional competitions.

"I like being in the agricultural profession in Virginia and I think winemaking has more of an aesthetic side than most types of farming, although there are some farms that produce exceptional quality of produce and animals, and take great pride in what they produce," Rouse said.

"Winemaking is a manufacturing process, not just the grape growing, but also the transformation," he added.

Jane usually handles the tasting room chores, talking with customers, pouring samples of wine and explaining the different vintages, as well as managing a lot of the paperwork part of the business. Shep is more of a roll up your sleeves and get out in the field kind of guy.

©Ken Perrotte

Rouse (above) regularly checks the oak casks containing a variety of vintages and closely monitors the transformation from fruit of the vine to quality wine. The Blue Ridge Mountains (right) presents a formidable backdrop for an afternoon dove shoot.

"I like working outdoors," he continued. "I'd much rather be in the vineyard than in the winery, unless it is cold as heck or hot as heck. When I have time off, I go hunting or fishing and I work plenty to deserve the time off, working about 3,200 hours a year.

"I try to do some waterfowl hunting in December and January. I don't bother with the early season. To me it doesn't seem like hunting season,

with the warmer weather" Rouse said.

"It's the same with spring turkey season, I'm way too busy to get up at 4:30 in the morning during spring gobbler season. It's hard enough getting up at 7 a.m.," he laughed.

Rouse said a variety of factors led him to locate his vineyard in Rockbridge County, not the least of which were hunting and fishing opportunities.

"I like the agricultural foundation of the area, the fact that the farms are small, you can approach people and get permission to hunt from many of them. They're pretty up-front with you. A few won't let you, but most are open to it.

"I like the climate here. The cooler weather in the summer is better for grape growing," he added. "The soil is also rich and very productive, and makes a good crop possible."

The cooler weather lets Rouse produce varieties that are more reminiscent of the Northern California, Oregon area such as pinot noir, a wine that "goes great with dove," being one of his favorites.

He said he doesn't specifically set out to make a wine that will add a flavorful accent to a meal featuring wild game.

"It just happens," he said, "My style of making wine accentuates the natural flavor of the grape. And that's one of the qualities of wild game, it has a lot of natural flavor, fully flavored wine with fully flavored foods complement one another. So, I don't really make wine with a focus on pairing with specific food, but we do make several wines that match very well."

©Ken Perrotte

Rouse's recommendations: "Pinot noir goes very well with dove and I like it with duck. I like cabernet and merlot with venison, as well. We make a wine called Tuscarora Red, made out of chambourcin and cabernet franc grapes, that also pairs well with game. It's fruity and fully flavored. I think our Chardonnay Reserve also works well with dove although I prefer the pinot noir. Riesling with trout, that's a natural and the chardonnay goes well with many types of fish. I love bluefish and rockfish with chardonnay."

He even makes a wine, "Jeremiah's," that he says pairs well with fried chicken. "Fried chicken may not be wild game, but it's a good Virginia southern food," he said with a chuckle.

The wine is named after the Jeremiah (the bullfrog) in the old Three Dog Night song "Joy to the World," which features the lyric, "And he always had some mighty fine wine."

Rouse said the lyric stuck with him and the song can often be heard blasting from a boombox at his wine festival tasting tent. "It works! It sells the wine. Everyone knows the song," he said.

Rouse's life in the Shenandoah Valley could be described as "idyllic" by many craving a greater connection to the outdoors and the natural world. Many Americans are divorced from any participation in the food chain. Suffice it to say Shep Rouse is not one of them. □

Ken Perrotte is an outdoor writer. His articles have appeared in numerous state, regional and national publications. He also writes a regular column for The Free Lance-Star *in Fredericksburg, Virginia.*

Judging MONSTERS

Virginia's Big Game Trophy Show celebrates 60 years of recording the best of the best.

by Bill Cochran

In the beginning, Virginia's Big Game Trophy Show was as much a beauty contest as a deer-scoring affair. "Shag" Rutter Jr., associate president of the Virginia Peninsula Sportsman's Association, sponsor of the event, simply looked at the 35 heads entered and determined the first-second-and-third-place standings. All three of the top bucks were taken within sight of Jamestown Island, where English settlers first hunted white-tailed deer in 1607.

The annual show is celebrating its 60th anniversary this fall. Gazing back on its innocent beginning, some say Rutter was lucky that no fistfights broke out at the initial contest. What saved the day? Tom Barclay a Newport News jeweler, who was the beloved president of the association, had entered an 18-point buck that so dominated the show

Virginia's scoring system involves a multitude of length and circumference measurements. Judges tend to favor big, basket-shaped racks with thick, main beams that sweep out extensively then come back together nearly tip to tip. Photos ©Dwight Dyke.

there was no question who was the winner. The deer already had gained fame as the "Big Buck of Surry County" in a 1938 issue of *Virginia Wildlife*. The author of the story was George B. Johnson of Newport News, a noted big game hunter and writer published in *Outdoor Life* and *Field & Stream*.

"I knew that Shag Rutter had been very lucky to have avoided arguments," Johnson would later say. He also knew that if the contest was to enjoy credibility and growth, it would have to advance beyond the status of "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." He set out to devise a better scoring system, tracing measuring techniques all the way to an English taxidermist, named Rowland Ward, who published a ranking system for deer in 1892. That system, based on measuring the outside length of the longest antler, was an improvement over a judge simply eyeballing heads, but not by much. The Boone and Crockett Club adopted the English system in 1932 for its first record book devoted entirely to North American big game. But Johnson wanted something that would provide more accuracy in dealing with the varied and intricate configurations of deer antlers.

In the meantime, the Virginia Peninsula Sportsman's Association continued to sponsor annual "beauty" contests. It increased the number of judges to three and it specified that deer entered had to be killed during the season prior to the contest. There were few problems, because World War II had limited hunting activities, rendering gasoline and ammunition scarce and putting men in uniform. Entries were few: three in 1942; two the next year. A lesser organization might have dropped the contest, but Johnson said, "Tidewater deer hunters have hound music in their blood."

In 1945, a category for bear was added to the contest. Johnson, who was chairman of the show that year, devised a skull measuring system, at a time when many hunters believed the trophy status of a bear should be determined by its weight or the measurement of its hide. The winning bear that year was a Dismal Swamp animal that was reported to weigh 701 pounds. Turkey wouldn't be included in the contest until much later, in 1985.

With World War II over, and hunting getting back into high gear, members of the Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association knew that the 1946 contest would be a big one. At the same time, the deer herd was beginning to expand into new areas of the state and a rivalry was developing between mountain and eastern hunters. Johnson, who had a degree in engineering, was asked to come up with a more precise deer scoring system, one that would elevate the standard beyond human judgment to the unbiased reality of a measuring tape. Something similar to what he had devised for bear. That year, the Virginia Game and Fish Commission officially endorsed the contest as the state championship. Johnson went to work.

"An involved scoring system of this sort does not spring full-grown from a person's mind, and this particular ranking method germinated and gradually developed over a period of 14 years of hunting, observation, discussion, argument, experiment and hard thinking," he reported.

As a result, Virginia's current deer scoring system had its birth during the 1946 contest. At that time, Boone and Crockett, the national scoring organization, was ranking deer under the archaic English system that measured the length of the longest point. While that might have been reliable for scoring a goat, its fallacy for deer became apparent with the report of a freak, 2-point buck that had a 12-inch spike on one side and a 34-inch spike on the other. The towering 34-inch beam made it a candidate for a world record.

It would be 1950 before Boone and Crockett advanced to its current scoring system, after gleaning incentive and tips from Johnson's work. That leaves many Virginians saying, with pride, that the Virginia System, as it is called, is the first modern one in the country, a statement seldom refuted. Johnson's scoring system and the annual contest that evolved around it has documented thousands of outstanding bucks and helped establish Virginia nationally as a stronghold of trophy deer. Sixty percent of the the bucks in Virginia's all-time, top-10 category have been taken since 1986, which verifies that trophy hunting opportunities in the Commonwealth aren't just good, but have been getting better. Even so, the first contest winner," the Barclay buck of Surry County, continues to hold up as an outstanding trophy. After disappearing for decades, the head was located and measured as part of the contest's 50th anniver-

sary celebration. It scored 231 7/8, which means that about 50 percent of the time it has outscored the annual contest winner.

The state's all-time champ is a 31-point Warren County buck killed during the 1992 muzzleloading season by Jim Smith of Front Royal. It isn't just Virginia's best buck, it also is the world record muzzleloader non-typical. It scored 296 under Virginia's measuring system, and 259 7/8 under Boone and Crockett.

The difference? Boone and Crockett has a typical and non-typical class while Virginia's system lumps all heads into a single category. The Virginia system involves a multitude of length and circumference measurements, more than Boone and Crockett, and favors big, basket-shaped racks with thick, main beams that sweep out extensively then come back together nearly tip-to-tip.

The fact that the two measuring methods are an oranges-vs-apples comparison creates some confusion now that a fascination with trophy bucks is nationwide. There have been a few efforts to eliminate the dual system by having Virginia adapt the Boone and Crockett method, but nothing serious in recent memory. After 60 years, Virginia contest officials appear no more willing to change to the national system than Boone and Crockett is likely to change to Virginia's system. You just don't throw out six decades of record keeping; besides, there is a pride factor.

In the mid-40s, the Virginia contest was divided into Eastern and Western regions, with the Blue Ridge Mountains roughly used as the dividing line. The location of the state finals alternate annually between east and west, normally in Williamsburg one year, Harrisonburg the next. The contest's 60-year tradition is scheduled for the east, where the Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association remains the sponsor and savors the claim of being the oldest volunteer sportsmen's association in America. The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chapter of the Izaak Walton League has sponsored western competition since 1950. The contest has thrived and prospered due to the dedication of the sportsmen who are members of these two organizations.

While there are many trophy-buck competitions across the state nowadays, this one has maintained its official status. It is the only route for getting a buck, bear or turkey into the state record book.

The east once dominated the competition, but that's no longer the case. At contest time, you can't be certain which side of the Blue Ridge has accounted for the big rack until the final measurement. Of the bucks in the all-time top 10, four are eastern animals; six are from the west. In 1987, the state champion came from Wise County, where 20 years before only 16 deer were reported killed. Restoration efforts and wise management practices have established nearly every county in Virginia as a potential trophy land.

Evolving with the development of Virginia's deer herd has been the growth of a solid core of accomplished and dedicated deer hunters. Most understand that taking a trophy buck is more a gift from nature than a reflection of their skill. In fact, the contest can be a humbling affair. A hunter walks into the show toting the trophy of a lifetime, and maybe stuffed into his pocket is a tattered hometown newspaper account of his prowess. Suddenly he is surrounded by other hunters bearing huge, mounted racks. At the conclusion, when the contest winner is interviewed, almost invariably come the words: "I was in the right place at the right time." But there is a bit more to success than that. It is a meshing of chance, fate and luck with skill, choice and timing. That's what makes deer hunting exciting.

With the growth of trophy-class deer in Virginia has come the lessening of stigma over killing does. Seasoned deer hunters now realize that the two are related. A trophy buck most likely is what he is because someone took a doe, probably several of them. Deer herds are controlled and herd quality is

Jeffery Hensley, from Shenandoah County, proudly holds Virginia's fifth top scoring trophy deer. Hensley's buck scored 265 6/16, with 28 points and was taken in Rockingham County during the 1990-91 season.

enhanced by the killing of slick-headed does and the preservation of young bucks. Meat hunting is okay, and venison can be the best trophy of all. In fact, hunters live in a society that gives meat hunting higher marks than sport hunting.

But pioneer trophy hunters, doubtlessly including George Johnson and Tom Barclay, would not want this carried to an extreme, as some are attempting, by claiming there is something seedy about trophy hunting. It remains a wholesome sport, unless hunters bend the rules in an effort to obtain success, unless they take the shot with some monetary prize in mind, unless they are in the sport to compete with other hunters, unless they consider their season unsuccessful if it fails to produce horns to hang on the wall. The value of a day afield never should be measured by the length of an antler. Most hunters who end up with a trophy at the big game show gave the trip no thought when they went out the door the day of their successful hunt. They were afield for the joy of hunting. The journey to Williamsburg or Harrisonburg was icing on their cake.

When George Johnson retired in 1971, following a career at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co., he moved to Buffalo, Wyoming, where he died in 1994 at the age of 88. His obituary in the *Buffalo Bulletin* mentioned nothing about the "Virginia System," but celebrated his life as an outdoorsman: "George was a member of St. John's Catholic Church in Buffalo, and a past member of many shooting and hunting organizations, including the Boone and Crockett Club. He was a past national shooting champion and had hunted the world over. George had bagged many species which were entered into the record books of big game."

In Virginia, it was George who created the record book. □

Bill Cochran covered more than half of the Big Game Shows as outdoor editor of the Roanoke Times *and now is host of an outdoor Web site: www.billcochran.com.*

For more information on the "Virginia System" of scoring and the Big Game Trophy Show, check out the Virginia Peninsula Sportsman's Association Web site at www.vpsa.org. Photos ©Dwight Dyke.

Virginia's Top-Scoring Trophy Deer

No. 1

Hunter: Jim Smith, Front Royal
County: Warren
Season: 1992-93
Points: 31
Virginia Score: 296

When the huge buck approached his stand on opening day of the muzzleloading season, Jim Smith knew better than to spend too much time gawking at its antlers. A cool and accomplished hunter, Smith concentrated on getting a good shot, no easy task for someone equipped with a side-lock muzzleloader and hunting in thick cover. An opening in the brush offered Smith a fleeting, yet solid, shot. Even when he stood over his trophy, on 30 acres of land he owns adjacent to the Shenandoah National Park, Smith didn't count points. There were just too many. There would be plenty of time for that later.

"I guess I was amazed more than anything," he said.

So would be thousands of other people, starting with Smith's hunting partner, Chico Partlowe.

"When they showed me the deer, I had to sit on the ground," he said. "It was just amazing. How could you ever expect to see anything like that in your life. It was incredible."

No. 2

Hunter: Edison Holcomb, Pound
County: Wise
Season: 1987-88
Points: 22
Virginia Score 272 10/16

On the eve of the final day of the season, some friends called Edison Holcomb, urging him to go to Giles County the next day. Giles, after all, had a big deer herd, and does were legal. In Wise, where deer restoration efforts were taking root, it was bucks or nothing.

©Bill Cochran

Virginia's top scoring trophy deer taken by Jim Smith, Front Royal.

©Bill Cochran

No. 2; deer taken by Edison Holcomb, Pound.

©Bill Cochran

No. 3; deer taken by Peter Crocker Jr., Windsor.

©Bill Cochran

No. 4; deer taken by James Shumaker, New Canton.

Holcolm, a 39-year-old coal miner, decided to stay close to home, where he had discovered some huge scrapes during a bird hunt. The next morning, about 8:30, he spotted a buck approximately 100 yards from his stand. Holcomb had to endure 10 agonizing minutes as it weaved through brush headed his way.

"He sounded like a bulldozer without an engine coming through the thickets," said Holcomb.

The buck ranked No. 1 in the state for five years and established far Southwest Virginia as trophy hunting territory.

No. 3

Hunter: Peter Crocker Jr., Windsor
County: Isle of Wight
Season: 1962-63
Points: 27
Virginia Score: 271 15/16

A peanut farmer, Peter Crocker was on an organized hound hunt as a member of the Isle of Wight Hunt Club. He heard the dogs first, then spotted the buck running his way. It was the last day of the seven-week eastern season.

"I got down behind a stump until the deer got close enough for me to shoot," said Crocker.

At the contest that year, judges counted 26 measurable points and came up with a 267 7/16 score. That made the buck No. 1 all time, and it dominated that position for 25 years. During that period, no other hunter came close, and some figured it always would be that way.

In 1985, Crocker was invited to bring his mounted trophy to the big game show as a crowd pleaser. The judges noticed some discrepancies in the original score and remeasured the rack. The new score was even more awesome.

No. 4

Hunter: James Shumaker, New Canton
County: Buckingham
Season: 1986-87
Points: 38
Virginia Score: 270 14/16

James Shumaker's first love is turkey hunting, and that's the way he started the day. When he returned home, his grown son insisted that they take a couple of young hounds to a neighbor's farm to see if they would flush a deer. A huge buck had been spotted there on several occasions.

While his son started the dogs near a creek, Shumaker took a stand in some woods. He hadn't been there long when he heard his son shout and the dogs yelp. Then the buck was coming his way.

Well into the night, Shumaker's driveway was filled with people coming to see the huge buck.

"One lady came by and saw it and drove to Richmond, about 60 miles away, to get film for her camera," Shumaker said.

The rack measured only 1 1/16 inches short of matching Peter Crocker's buck, the record at the time.

No. 5

Hunter: Jeffery Hensley, Shenandoah
County: Rockingham
Season: 1990-91
Points: 28
Virginia Score: 265 6/16

Things weren't going Jeffery Hensley's way. The first week of the deer season he had failed to spot a single antlered deer, even though he was hunting an area where he had located an impressive number of horned trees.

"Trees about 6 inches in diameter had been scrubbed," he said.

Hensley was poised to get a fresh start early Monday, the second week of the season, but he overslept.

As he hurried toward his stand, well after daylight, Hensley figured he'd be too late to catch the morning movement of deer going from their nighttime feeding area to their daytime bedding area. But when he paused to catch his breath, he spotted four does. A huge buck was following them, its nose to the ground like a trailing dog.

The rut-inspired buck went into the record book at fourth spot, then two years later was bumped to fifth.

Journal

Hunter Education Championship Results

The 1999 Virginia Hunter Education Youth Championships were held this year at Holiday Lake 4-H, in Appomattox, Virginia, on May 1st and 2nd. The event, sponsored by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, brought 159 youths from around the state to compete in six hunting-related events: wildlife identification, archery, rifle, shotgun, orienteering skills and hunter safety trail.

The championships are open to all hunter education graduates who meet the following requirements: each team or individual must be accompanied by a certified hunter education instructor; individual participants are assigned and compete on a team; competition contestants must be the appropriate age by the registration deadline date. Age groups consist of junior (12-14) and senior (15-19).

This year's top hunters are:

Junior Individual Champion
Brandon Martin, Nottoway County

Senior Individual Champion
Joseph Barham, Powhatan County

Junior Team Champions
Powhatan County
Jessica Barham
Patrick Rose
Joseph Barlett
Jordan Saba
Tommy Watson
Greg Flickinger

Senior Team Champions
Scott County
Steven Taylor
Jamie Butler
Randy Saul
Robert Blanton
John Jobe
Jack Dougherty

1st Annual Virginia Game Bird Conference Announced

Are you interested in game birds or the operation of a hunting preserve? If so, you are invited to attend the 1st Annual Virginia Game Bird Conference to be held at the Donaldson Brown Hotel and Conference Center in Blacksburg, Virginia, on February 20-22, 2000. This educational symposium is being cooperatively sponsored by the Virginia Game Breeders and Hunting Preserve Association, Virginia Tech Extension Service, and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

This two-day conference is open to the public and will be an excellent opportunity for individuals to learn more about the game bird industry. A series of lectures will be provided by experts on game bird production, habitat management, training hunting dogs, and hunting preserve operations. Attendees will also have opportunities for informal discussions with presenters, other game bird producers, and experienced preserve operators. Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned veteran, you are sure to benefit from attending this conference.

To receive more information about this conference, please contact event coordinator Bob Saikowski of the Virginia Game Bird and Hunting Preserve Association at 804-448-1045 or e-mail him at vapheasant @juno.com. □

Book Review

Birds of Shenandoah National Park
A Naturalist's View
By Terry and Patressa Lindsay
Photographs by Rob Simpson

With nearly 196,000 acres, the Shenandoah National Park is a cornucopia of bird life. Everything from hummingbirds to peregrine falcons rely on this refuge as a resting spot or a place to raise their young. Terry Lindsay worked for the Shenandoah National Park as a ranger and naturalist for over 10 years. It was during this time that he began to appreciate the Park's diverse bird life. With more than 205 different species of birds recorded in the Park, since its establishment in 1935, he realized his desire to learn more would never be satisfied. Factors like weather, seasonal changes and habitat would always keep him searching for new sightings.

Together with his wife, Patressa, and wildlife photographer Rob Simpson, the idea to create an informative book on some of the more common birds one might encounter while visiting the Park came about. "*Birds of Shenandoah National Park, A Naturalist View*, is not intended to be a field guide," says Terry "but instead a tool to spark ones interest in, and a greater appreciation of, the abundant and varied birds of Shenandoah National Park." He also wants readers of this book to understand the importance of "bird knowing rather than bird watching."

Readers will enjoy the firsthand accounts of the many bird sightings made by Terry throughout his stay at Shenandoah National Park. Combined with excellent photography

this book is a pleasure to read and if you're looking for some way to have fun this summer then think about picking up a copy of this book and visiting Shenandoah National Park.

Birds of Shenandoah National Park, A Naturalist's View may be ordered directly from the Shenandoah Natural History Association, 3655 U.S. Hwy 211, Luray, VA 22835 or by calling (540) 999-3582. Profits from the sale of this book will help support the park. □

Operation CleanWater on the South Fork

by Bruce Ingram

If you happen to be on the South Fork of the Shenandoah on Sunday, September 19 and see canoes piled high with trash bags, tires, and assorted other flotsam, don't be surprised. That's because you will have encountered participants in the 13th annual Operation CleanWater.

Organized by Shenandoah River Outfitters (SRO) in Luray, Operation CleanWater has become a much anticipated affair says Nancy Goebel, president of the canoe livery.

"I credit my brother, Joe Sottosanti, for developing a plan to clean up the river," she says. "Joe has always loved the river, and he felt that since SRO used the river we should play a part in keeping it clean.

"We have had informal days when trash pickups took place since the livery came into being in 1972. But in 1987, SRO came up with the idea of Operation CleanWater, and it has been going strong ever since."

The basic premise of Operation CleanWater is that Shenandoah River Outfitters will offer participants free canoeing and shuttle in exchange for two bags of trash brought in from the river. Reservations and a deposit are required for CleanWater, but the deposit is refunded after the trash has been taken to the canoe livery.

Additionally, this offer also applies every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday during the spring through fall period when the canoe livery is open. Then a small fee is required in order to cover the cost of shuttles. Scout and church groups often take advantage of the offer.

Goebel says that on average, participants turn in some four to six tons of trash on that third Sunday in September. Thankfully, most of that garbage hasn't been left behind by fishermen and canoeists.

"I would guess that most of the trash picked up comes from flood debris," she says. For example, after the September, 1996 flood, I saw several hundred plastic grocery store bags up in trees along the river.

"Quite a bit of the other debris comes from homes and construction work along the river. During any Operation CleanWater, I would expect 80 to 100 tires to be turned in."

Nancy Goebel says that the canoe livery gives out prizes for individuals or groups turning in the most pounds of trash and the weirdest junk. During one recent clean-up campaign, a Japanese license plate won the latter category. Other recent contenders have included refrigerators, trailer parts, and lawn furniture. To participate, call SRO at (800-6CANOE2). □

Hunters for the Hungry Needs Your Help

Philip Morris, USA has approved a $10,000 matching grant challenging groups, clubs, organizations, associations and churches to get involved in the Hunters for the Hungry program. Philip Morris has agreed to match $1.00 for each $2.00 donated to the Hunters for the Hungry Program by groups between now and **August 30, 1999.** "We need to raise $20,000 before August 30, 1999, to receive the matching funds from Philip Morris USA," states David Horne, program director for Hunters for the Hungry.

Your support will help provide needed funds for processing deer meat in 1999, feed the needy and promote Virginia's traditions of ethical hunting and neighbor helping neighbor. When submitting your gift, please mention the Philip Morris matching grant in your correspondence and on the memo line of your check. Remember August 30, 1999, is the deadline for receiving contributions for this generous offer by Philip Morris, USA. For additional information, call Hunters for the Hungry at 1-800-352-4868 or write to P.O. Box 304, Big Island, VA 24526.

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Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

The Peanut Butter Tree

A handsome red-bellied woodpecker bobbed and bounced along the side of the rotten tree, his belly glowing red in the low evening light. I had never noticed just how red their bellies really were until that very moment. The elegant bird appeared to know where he was going but seemed cautious...watching for other birds who might be after his stash. As if on cue, the sharp, fussy call of a downy woodpecker drilled the air and the red-belly cocked his head, glaring back at the intruder. I fired off a few frames just as a grey squirrel charged up the tree scaring the distracted bird away.

Why was there so much activity around this particular rotten tree? It was a stage I had set for the sole purpose of photographing woodpeckers and nuthatches. I had made, what I call, a peanut butter tree.

It all started when I decided I needed more pictures of woodpeckers. I spoke with fellow photo buddies on how they went about photographing these birds, took their suggestions and came up with the peanut butter tree; simply, a rotten tree, it's holes stuffed with peanut butter. To find a tree, I went into the woods near my parent's house and walked around until I found an attractive, fallen tree with pre-drilled woodpecker holes. Then, my good natured mom helped me lug the dusty ole thing to my truck and from there it was off to my backyard. Next, I nailed two pieces of wood to its base so that it would stand up on it's own. Then, I placed it in a location where the light was nice when I wanted to shoot pictures and I stuffed the most attractive holes, facing the camera, full of super chunky peanut butter and bird seed. When that was done I placed a blind close enough so that I could photograph the visiting birds with whichever lens I chose. I could shoot with a telephoto as short as 100mm or as long as they make them. For this situation, I chose a 300mm f2.8 but a 200mm works just as well.

As for a blind, all you really need is some type of material to throw over your head. Be creative! You can build a small blind out of sticks or any material which will hide your form; a sheet, (preferably dark colored, as white might scare the birds since it's so bright.), a tent, or your car. You could even place the peanut butter tree near a window of your house! Once you've created a blind, get comfortable and pull up a chair! Make sure you're eye level with the best peanut butter stuffed hole! (Remember "How Low Can You Go," *Photo Tips* July, 1999?)

Check out the red belly on this red-bellied woodpecker! Low evening light created the backlight and a fill flash was used to balance the light and give his eyes a highlight. Photo ©Lynda Richardson.

Once the blind and "feeder" tree are in place I allow the birds to visit undisturbed for several days. This allows them to find the food and become accustomed to the blind nearby. (Be sure the blind isn't flapping in the breeze as this will scare the birds!) I try and keep the peanut butter flowing though I did have a bit of trouble with squirrels and raccoons hogging most of the goods. After a few days, I grabbed my cameras and dragged a chair into the blind where I sat for a few hours each day watching the birds and squirrels and shooting neat photos of their visits. I had everything set up to shoot in the afternoon when the light was low but later reversed the set up so that the evening light was behind my subject. It was then I tried using fill-flash to create a different look to my images. Fill flash guarantees a highlight in the bird's eye and will stop action if you have to use slow shutter speeds in the gradually fading light. You can use a tripod, light stand or Bogen magic arm to hold the flash off camera and it can be triggered either by a long extension cord or an infrared remote trigger. Or, depending on the distance you are away from your subject and the strength of the flash, you can use an on camera flash. Fun, eh?

So this summer go out and find your own peanut butter tree. I promise you will enjoy hours of fun photographing entertaining wildlife subjects, which will actually come to you! Happy shooting! □

August Afield

by Jack Randolph

When August comes many of us have had our fill of summer. We tend to look right through this month, anticipating the joys of autumn just before us. Yet, as hot and dry and stormy as August can be, it still has lots to offer.

The "dog days" of August are seldom thought of as big bass days, but they can be. Their appetites sharpened by days that have been growing shorter ever since June, the bass know full well that the lean months are coming and they become more aggressive. Briery Creek Lake, the Old Dominion's premier big bass lake, generally produces a few whoppers this month. Last year one weighing almost 10 pounds was taken in August and the year before a pair of scale-busters weighing 11 and 13 pounds were taken.

August is also a last call for bream and it is a fine month for catching big blue catfish in the James and Rappahannock Rivers and in the headwaters of Buggs Island Lake. Last year August was also an excellent month for landlocked striped bass at Buggs Island Lake and Lake Anna.

If the water conditions are correct August can be a fulfilling month on the state's smallmouth bass streams. Limiting factors are the amount of water and grass in the streams.

We see our first hunting season, crow season, this month. The seasons for hunting squirrels, doves, rails, and resident Canada geese are just around the corner. This is the last call for landowners to place their duck blind licenses on their blind sites and hunters of migratory critters should be reminded to call in as soon as they buy their licenses to secure their H.I.P. numbers. They are free, but they are also mandatory. The telephone number is still 1-800-WETLAND (938-5263).

The successful dove, goose or squirrel hunter uses this month to locate good hunting territory and to secure permission or permits.

This is the month when the Board of the Game Department sets the waterfowl seasons and it is also just about the last call for getting in some dove practice on the skeet ranges and archery practice on the archery ranges. It is also "last call" for hunters who use tree stands to practice and renew their proficiency with them.

Of course, here in Virginia August is a likely month for hurricanes. It is also a prime month for offshore fishing. This month we often experience world class, white marlin fishing off our shores and inshore a small population of tarpon wind up their business on the Eastern Shore. Unfortunately, hurricanes have a history of shutting down our offshore and ocean fishing early and all we can do is watch the weather reports and hope.

In the bay, cobia are starting to appear next to buoys and bridge abutments as they get ready to leave. Spot and croakers put on their golden armor as they get ready to spawn and, late in the month, there is perceptible movement towards the mouth of the bay.

Flounder fishing can be excellent this month as it was in August last year.

In the get-ready department, hunters wishing to participate in the many special hunts offered each year should watch the newspapers and send in their applications. And, oh yes, if you have been neglecting to take an ailing blunderbuss to the gunsmith, you had better get with it because it is almost too late for the onrushing hunting seasons.

If your plans include hunting on a military reservation this year be advised that before a permit is issued hunters must offer proof of completion of a hunter safety course.

As you can see August is a busy month as it stands near the end of summer and the threshold of autumn. □

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RECIPES

by Joan Cone

Doves—A Target For Your Table

Doves! There are millions of them. Today's farming practices provide a perfect environment for these swift and tricky targets. Best of all, they are delicious, as the following recipe will prove.

Be sure to bring afield a cooler with ice or icepacks. This makes a handy seat and keeps birds fresh despite hot weather.

Menu

Doves Baked With Orange Sauce
Lemon-Buttered New Potatoes
Fried Green Tomatoes
Pear And Pecan Salad
Deep Dish Apple-Date Pie

Doves Baked With Orange Sauce

9 to 12 whole dressed doves, split down back
3 tablespoons butter or margarine

Orange Sauce:
¼ cup butter or margarine
¼ cup flour
1 tablespoon sugar
½ teaspoon instant chicken bouillon granules
⅛ teaspoon garlic powder
⅛ teaspoon onion powder
Freshly ground pepper to taste
1 cup water
¾ cup orange juice
¼ brandy (optional)

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large nonstick skillet, melt 3 tablespoons butter over medium heat. Add doves and cook for 3 to 5 minutes or just until meat is lightly browned, turning occasionally. Arrange doves breast side up in a large casserole with lid. Set aside. In same skillet, melt ¼ cup butter over medium heat. Stir in flour, sugar, bouillon, garlic powder, onion powder and pepper. Blend in water, juice and brandy. Cook for 5 or 6 minutes or until sauce is slightly thickened, stirring constantly. Pour sauce over doves in baking dish. Cover and bake for 1 hour or until meat is tender. Makes 3 to 4 servings.

Lemon-Buttered New Potatoes

8 to 12 small new potatoes (about 1 ½ pounds)
⅓ cup butter or margarine
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

©Leonard Lee Rue Jr.

1 teaspoon grated lemon rind
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Salt and pepper to taste
⅓ teaspoon ground nutmeg

Peel a narrow strip around center of each potato. Cook potatoes in boiling water to cover for 15 minutes or until tender. Drain and keep warm. Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add parsley and remaining ingredients. Cook, stirring often, until thoroughly heated. Drizzle over potatoes and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Fried Green Tomatoes

4 medium-size green tomatoes, chilled
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon sugar
¼ teaspoon paprika
Ground red pepper to taste
1 ½ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
½ cup yellow cornmeal
2 to 3 tablespoons vegetable oil

Cut tomatoes into ½-inch slices. Stir together mustard and next 4 ingredients. Spread on both sides of tomato slices. Coat with cornmeal. Fry tomatoes in hot oil in a skillet over medium heat for 3 minutes on each side or until browned; drain. Makes 4 servings.

Pear and Pecan Salad

1 package (10 ounces) salad greens
2 medium pears, sliced
1 cup seedless red grapes
Ranch dressing
⅓ cup pecan or walnut halves, toasted
Blue cheese crumbles (optional)

Toss greens, pears and grapes in large bowl. Drizzle with dressing and top with pecans and cheese just before serving. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Deep Dish Apple-Date Pie

6 tart apples
1 cup pitted dates, sliced
½ cup sugar
½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
½ teaspoon nutmeg
Grated peel from 1 lemon
Grated peel from 1 orange
3 tablespoons butter or margarine
Pastry for 1 crust pie

Pare and core apples and cut into eighths. Arrange half the apple slices in baking dish and top with half the dates; repeat. Combine sugars, nutmeg and grated peels. Sprinkle over top and dot with butter. Top with thin sheet of pastry. Cut slits in pastry to allow steam to escape. Bake in a preheated 425° F. oven for about 45 minutes or until apples are soft. Serve warm with plain cream. Makes 6 servings. ☐

Naturally Wild

story and illustration by Spike Knuth

The Belted Kingfisher

If you've ever spent any time along a lake or river, you've probably heard the piercing, rattling call of the belted kingfisher. This bird is common over much of North America. It is so-named because of the bluish belt across its chest. The male is dressed with dull blue and white underparts. The female is more colorful having rusty red flanks along with a blue chest belt or band.

The kingfisher has a large crested head in comparison to its body, a long sturdy bill and short legs and little feet. It measures about 12 inches in length, and flies with deep, irregular wing beats, beating fast at first, then changing to slower easy beats.

It establishes regular lookout perches along the lake or river shores, which are visited throughout the day. This bird can spot a small fish from 30 or more feet above the water, depending on water clarity. When a fish or other prey is spotted, it will fly to a spot above it, hover briefly, beating is wings rapidly. Suddenly it closes its wings and plummets downward, knifing into the water to catch its prey. If successful, the kingfisher flies up to a barren branch, hammers the fish on the head to relax it, then flips it to swallow it head first.

Kingfishers nest in burrows dug in dirt, sand or gravel banks along or close to water, laying 3 or 4 white eggs. Normally they'll stick to freshwater lakes, ponds, and streams from the mountains to the coast. However, they can also inhabit tidal brackish rivers, and they'll even fish, the salty coastal tidal creeks and bay shores. □

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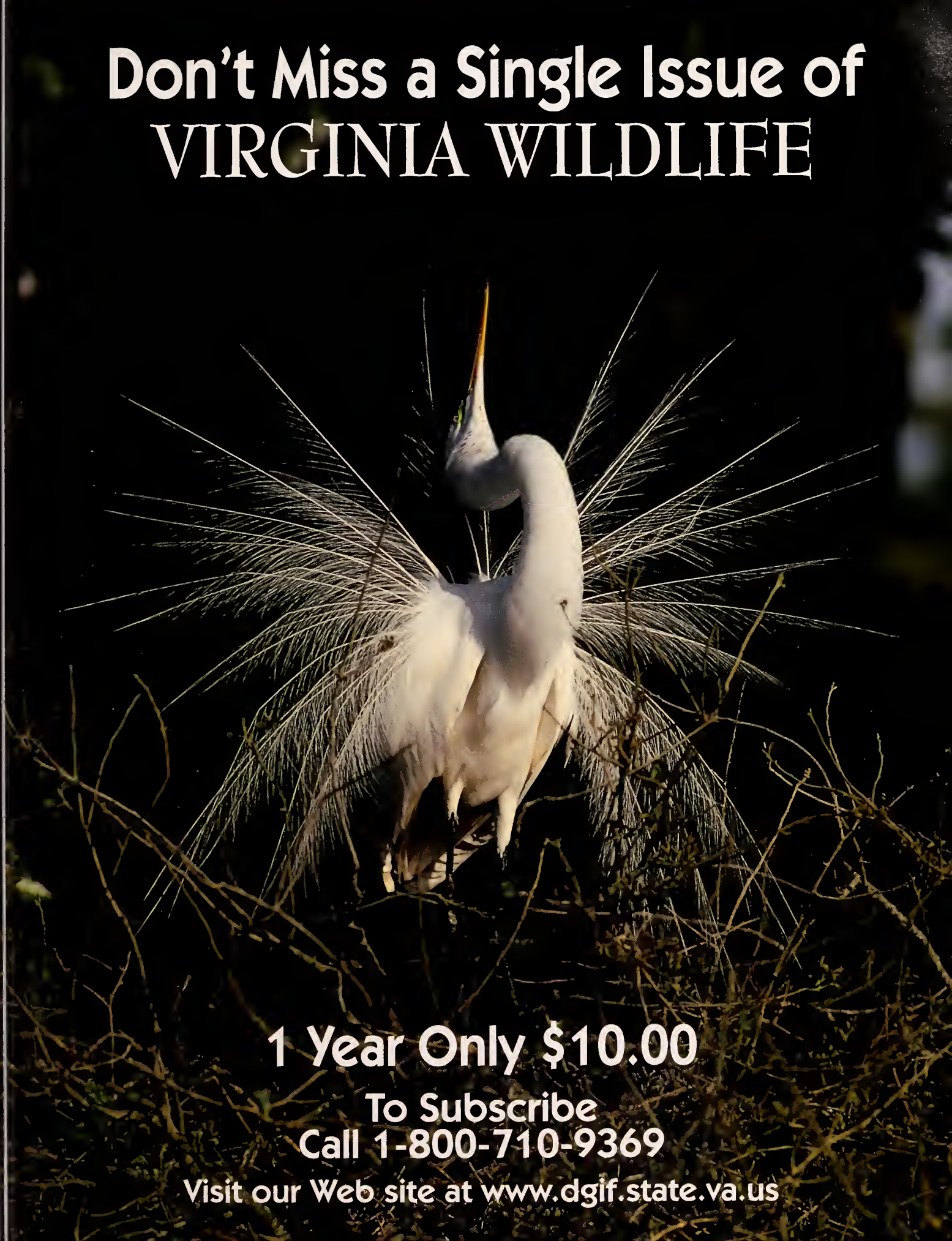

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On The Water

by Jeff Decker, Boating Education Coordinator

Boat Fires. . .The Key is Prevention

Nothing is more frightening to a boater than to smell smoke or see flames erupting from somewhere on their boat. When there is a fire at sea, timely action is necessary, but the best action comes from taking steps that prevent the fire from starting in the first place.

Types of Fires

For a fire to occur there must be three elements in place. The "Fire Triangle" consists of oxygen, fuel, and heat. When all three sides of the triangle are present, a fire occurs. If any of the sides of the fire triangle are removed, the fire will go out.

Inspecting for Fire Hazards

- Is there an accumulation of fuel in the bilges?
- Are the fuel lines in good shape, without frays or bulges?
- Is the backfire flames arrestor in good condition and securely fastened?
- Does the power ventilation blower operate correctly and are the ventilation ducts and cowlings in good condition?
- Are propane tanks securely fastened in place?

Safe Fueling Practices

- Shut off the engines and all electrical equipment.
- Have all persons leave the boat.
- Ground the fuel nozzle to the fuel tank fill opening.
- Don't overfill the tank. Leave room for the fuel to expand.
- Wipe up any spilled fuel. Replace the fuel cap.
- Operate the installed ventilation blower for at least 4 minutes prior to restarting the engine.
- Have passengers embark after the engine(s) have been restarted.

Fire Extinguishers

- Do you have the proper amount, type, and size fire extinguisher onboard?
- Are the extinguishers readily accessible?
- Are they U.S. Coast Guard approved
- Is there an adequate charge?
- Is the discharge nozzle clear of any debris?
- Is the safety pin intact?

See the *Virginia Watercraft Owners Guide* for fire extinguisher requirements

Calls for Assistance

- At the first sign of fire, have all persons put on their life jackets.
- Make the call. Don't wait until the fire is out of control or until it has prevented you from using your radio.
- A "mayday" is appropriate for emergency situations. The call, made on Channel 16, VHF/FM, consists of the word "mayday" repeated three times, followed by the name of the vessel, position, nature of distress, and number of persons on board (including yourself).
- Sounding the danger signal (five or more short blasts of the boat's horn in rapid succession) may alert other boaters in the area of your situation.

Fire safety and fire prevention are extremely important to everyone, but especially to boaters. Every boater needs to be aware of potential hazards and correct them before becoming a disaster. A fire onboard a boat is much more life threatening than a fire onshore. A boat fire presents two potential dangers; one from the fire and the other from the water you may find yourself swimming in.

To learn about fire safety and other recreational boating topics, take a boating safety education course. Call 1-804-367-1125, 1-800-245-BOAT or visit the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Web site at www.dgif.state.va.us. ☐

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Attention Migratory Game Bird Hunters

Do you hunt doves, woodcock, rails, snipe, coots, ducks, brant, or geese in Virginia?

As of July 1, 1999 everyone (including landowners, lifetime, and age-exempt hunters) must register to hunt migratory game birds in Virginia. To register, hunters must call 1-800-WETLAND (1-800-938-5263). You will be asked to provide your name, address and answer a few short questions about past hunting success. This is a mandatory program for all migratory game bird hunters. Please help us help you to preserve your migratory game bird seasons for the future.

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